

## EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

### FAITH IN DIPLOMACY

#### HON. WAYNE T. GILCHREST

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 14, 2008*

Mr. GILCHREST. Madam Speaker, I rise today to submit in the RECORD an opinion piece by Marshall Breger, a former alternate delegate of the U.S. to the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva, and currently a professor of law at the Columbus School of Law, the Catholic University of America. In it, he discusses the importance of religion in negotiating peace through diplomacy.

#### FAITH IN DIPLOMACY

(By Marshall Breger)

Whatever one's view of the Oslo peace process, it is remarkable that the 1993 signing ceremony on the White House lawn did not include benedictions by rabbis, imams, or priests. In an America where religious leaders open sessions of Congress, pray for the success of our armies, and even sometimes pray for fair winds and bless the fleet at yachting regattas, this is passing strange.

The absence of religious content speaks volumes about the assumptions that drive conventional diplomatic wisdom in Washington. Foreign policy professionals instinctively recoil at the notion that religion can or should play an important role in foreign policy. They see it as a "private matter," according to Tom Farr, former director of the State Department's office of international religious freedom, "properly beyond the bounds of policy analysis and action."

Far too many American diplomats and think-tank gurus continue to dismiss or, at best, ignore religion as "a tool of statecraft." They talk about promoting "civil society" but forget that in regions as diverse as the Middle East and South Asia, the largest and most powerful actors in civil society are religious. They assume that a "moderate" Muslim is a less religious Muslim, and that an "Islamist" who believes that Islam should play a role in politics must be in his or her heart a bomb-throwing extremist. They treat religion as a distraction to diplomacy and a threat to global stability.

Academic theories of modernization teach that as societies modernize they irrevocably grow more secular. But the truth is otherwise. Sociologist Peter Berger contends that religious sensibility does not wither in the modern world. Even the State Department, long a bastion of secularist thinking, is beginning to get the picture. In a powerful book written after she left the State Department, former secretary Madeleine Albright effectively offered a mea culpa for ignoring religion while she was in office. And Karen Hughes, former undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs, said that President Bush wanted her "to reach out and meet with religious leaders—because faith is such an important part of life for so many Americans and so many people across the world."

How should we incorporate religion in our foreign policy? First, we must study it. You can't understand West Bank settlers without understanding the "Greater Israel" theology

of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook and his disciples. Nor can you follow Shia politics without an appreciation of the role of the ashura—the commemoration of the death of the Prophet Mohammed's grandson in the 680 battle of Karbala—as the transformative event in Shia martyrology, or the oft-misunderstood role of the mahdi—the "hidden Imam" expected to bring justice and final judgment to the world—in Shia eschatology. Or how the "puritanism" of 18th-century theologian Mohammed Ibn Abd-al Wahab has affected the Salafi understanding of the Quran.

Only by understanding religion can we mobilize it as a force for reconciliation and as an ally in the search for peaceful solutions. No one can deny the injurious role religious fervor has had in foreign affairs—just think of the Thirty Years' War and Osama bin Laden. Nonetheless, we know of many examples of how religion can assist in the process of making peace. Consider the Community of Sant'Edigio, which has midwived cease-fires in conflict zones like Mozambique. The Vatican mediated the Argentina-Chile dispute over the Beagle Channel, and evangelical Christians have helped place international religious freedom, AIDS, and global poverty on the major powers' foreign policy agendas. Jewish groups, for their part, have led the campaign to end the violence in Darfur.

In 2002, Jewish, Muslim, and Christian leaders in the Middle East signed the Alexandria Declaration of the Religious Leaders of the Holy Land, committing themselves to the dignity of the individual, whatever his or her religion, and an end to bloodshed. That work is being carried on by groups like Mosaica and the Adam Institute and by other religious leaders such as Knesset member Rabbi Michael Melchior and Sheikh Abdullah Nimr Darwish, founder of the Islamic movement in Israel.

Religious leaders in Jerusalem have formed a Council of Religious Institutions of the Holy Land to promote not just interfaith dialogue, but also practical advances like access to and protection of holy sites; religious freedom; education for tolerance in mosques, synagogues, and churches; and support for a two-state solution that recognizes the dignity of both Israelis and Palestinians. This nascent enterprise includes religious leaders such as the Latin patriarch, chief rabbis, and Sheikh Taysir Al-Tamimi, head of the Sharia courts of Palestine.

These developments make clear that religious leaders can foster reconciliation in the Middle East and elsewhere. To succeed, any new peace initiative must encompass their efforts. Perhaps this time around we can avoid the religious deficit of so much previous American diplomacy.

Ari J. Livne, a senior at Lakeside School in Seattle, and Anisha Gulabani, a senior at Eastlake in Sammamish, Washington, were included in the list of 141 Presidential Scholars for 2008. Since its inception in 1964, the Presidential Scholars Program has honored more than 5,500 graduating high school seniors for academic excellence, artistic accomplishments, and civic contributions. In short, the young men and women named each year to the Presidential Scholars list represent the best and brightest young people in America—the leaders of tomorrow. Ari and Anisha are preparing themselves to lead this country into the future.

Ari joined the list of Presidential Scholars in the Arts in 2008 because of his accomplishments in the visual, literary and performing arts, as well as for his scholarship, leadership and public service. Initially, more than 7,000 young people from across the Nation applied for a spot on this prestigious list before it was narrowed down to just Ari and 19 other young talents. Ari holds a 3.7 cumulative GPA and will take his place among some of Lakeside's most outstanding graduates—including Microsoft's Bill Gates and former Washington Governor Booth Gardner—when he enters the next step in his educational journey in the fall. After turning down a scholarship offer from Julliard, Ari decided on Yale in order to pursue both his academic interests and incredible musical gifts simultaneously.

Anisha will graduate this spring from Eastlake High School with a perfect 4.0 GPA. She fills her school day with every Advanced Placement course available to her. She is a co-captain on the debate team, a member of the National Honor Society, a member of Mu Alpha Theta—Lakeside's Mathematics Honor Society—and a member of the Children's Hospital Guild in Seattle. I am told that initially she wanted to become a medical doctor. However, after her sister's leg was amputated, she decided to focus on bio-medical engineering with a special focus on prosthetic limb design at Harvard University.

Ari and Anisha showcased incredible talent at their respective high schools and clearly deserved the honor of being a part of the 2008 Presidential Scholars Program. I hope they continue on their promising course and emerge as leaders in whatever field they choose.

### PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLARS

#### HON. DAVID G. REICHERT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 14, 2008*

Mr. REICHERT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the incredible talents of two young people who reside in the Eighth District of Washington State. Both students represent the promise of America and lead their peers inside and out of the classroom.

### TRIBUTE TO OTANA JAKPOR

#### HON. KEN CALVERT

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 14, 2008*

Mr. CALVERT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to an extraordinary young woman from Riverside, California. Otana Jakpor may only be 14 years old and

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